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SENSITIVE

USDA/FAS/FAA/CALEXANDER/MCONLON

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SUBJECT: INDIA TSUNAMI UPDATE: JANUARY 13

REF: NEW DELHI 103

1. (SBU) Summary: Consular officers in Chennai continue to work to resolve the fewer than 20 remaining missing persons inquiries in India. The USAID/DART team that conducted assessments in Andhra Pradesh has found that there is not an emergency need for shelter, food and water in the state. The GOI has not yet been able to assemble a team of scientists to consider the need for a tsunami warning system for India, and SciCouns is working on the possibility of a US participant for the GOI's late January warning system brainstorming session. New Delhi raised the number of tsunami-related Indian deaths by 345 in the last 24 hours amid criticism in local media of India's refusal to accept outside assistance. End Summary.

Consular: Bringing Down the Numbers

2. (U) ConGen Chennai is working to clear the fewer than 20 remaining open missing persons inquiries for India.

USAID: Andhra Pradesh May Need Support For Livelihoods

3. (U) On January 12 and 13, the USAID/DART team conducted assessments of coastal villages in southern Andhra Pradesh. The team reports that in Andhra Pradesh, shelter, food, water and sanitation are not emergency needs, but some livelihoods support may be required. It is still unclear whether NGOs will be permitted to operate in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. There is little available land for resettlement in the Islands, and displaced residents will likely need to remain in camps until a survey of habitable land is completed and resettlement areas are determined.

Tsunami Warning System for India?

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4. (SBU) The sensationalist "Asian Age," in a January 13 report, highlighted that Science and Technology Minister Kapil Sibal continues to promise a tsunami warning system for India. Meanwhile, India is struggling to assemble a group of scientists to advise the GOI on what tsunami warning systems are like, and what are the benefits likely to accrue to India from such a system (reftel). SciCouns has been in touch with NOAA and the NSF regarding possible US participants to the January 21-22 Tsunami Warning System Brainstorming Session the Department of Science and Technology is calling in New Delhi.

"Tsunami Diplomacy:" Continued

5. (U) Despite the generally positive take on India's handling of the disaster at home and in neighboring countries, some observers have raised questions about the wisdom of New Delhi's refusal of outside help. A January 12 editorial in the "Indian Express" criticized the GOI's decision to disallow Kofi Annan's visit as demonstrating "indifferent diplomacy" and "misplaced hypersensitivity" to offers of assistance. A "Tribune" op-ed from the same day called India's position illogical, noting that "India, more so its government, suffers from a silly notion about nationalism." Highlighting the GOI's "hypocritical stand," the piece noted that NGOs operating in India receive a large amount of foreign funding. Novelist Amitav Ghosh, in his three-part article published in the "Hindu," remarked that Indians waiting for days for help in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands took little consolation in radio reports that New Delhi's rapid deployment of assistance to Sri Lanka would establish India as a superpower.

Casualty Numbers

6. (U) Over the last 24 hours, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) again revised the Indian dead and missing numbers upward. On January 13, the MHA reported that 10,672 Indians had died as a result of the tsunami, an increase of 345 from

January 12. While the MHA has not yet declared the more than 5,000 missing as presumed dead, the GOI lowered the figure by three to 5,625.

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